

GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Private Sector Intervention Case Example

Changing behaviour through a focus
on people

Case categories

Company: **Unilever Plc**

Industry: **Food and Beverage**

Location: **South Africa**

Programme: **HIV/AIDS**

Key questions

- How can Unilever extend its comprehensive care, support and treatment programmes to include the 36% of employees who are not enrolled in a health insurance plan?
- If Unilever wants to establish its HIV prevalence, should it do this through an un-linked saliva survey, or through a successful voluntary counselling and testing campaign?
- Can other organizations adopt Unilever's HIV/AIDS roadmap to guide the implementation of their HIV/AIDS programmes?

Overview

Company

Unilever South Africa is located in Durban, South Africa and is a subsidiary of Unilever Plc.

- Unilever Plc is one of the world's largest consumer goods companies. In 2001, Unilever Plc employed 279,000 people and generated US\$ 46 billion in revenues and US\$ 1.6 billion in net income.
- The main business of Unilever South Africa, as is the case with its parent company, is the marketing and manufacture of fast moving consumer goods in home care, personal care and foods. Unilever South Africa employs over 5,000 people and has seven manufacturing sites in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal. The largest manufacturing unit is located on the East Rand of Johannesburg in a town called Boksburg. This site employs more than 900 people and 150 contractors. Unilever has operated in South Africa for over a century.

Business Case

The company believes that succeeding requires the highest standards of corporate behaviour towards employees, consumers and societies in which it conducts business. As a consequence the company has high levels of employee benefits and is active in community development.

- Unilever has **not conducted a formal prevalence survey** and has correspondingly not conducted a formal economic assessment evaluating the financial impact of HIV/AIDS on the Boksburg factory. Although historical data is not available, Unilever is starting to track HIV/AIDS-related ill-health retirements and HIV/AIDS-related deaths in service. In 2002, Unilever initiated a partnership with Boston University to conduct an in-depth economic impact assessment linked with a sero-prevalence survey.
- In June 2001, Unilever worked with Gerhard Burger to conduct a **Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) assessment**. The survey determined that employees demonstrate a number of high-risk behaviours and was used to establish the communications strategy for 2002.
- Unilever's 2002 workplace HIV/AIDS **programme budget is US\$ 70,000, which corresponds to US\$ 78 per employee per year**. This is allocated to awareness and education programmes (64%) and the voluntary counselling and testing programme (36%). This budget is supplemented through an allocation of US\$ 100,000 from the Unilever Chairman's fund to support community programmes in the areas surrounding the Boksburg factory. The Unilever Foundation in South Africa invests a further US\$ 30,000 per annum in operating costs for HIV/AIDS child care homes. Additionally, employees voluntarily raise funds for HIV/AIDS each year.

Project Description

Unilever Boksburg has played a leading role in the development of HIV/AIDS programmes in Unilever South Africa.

- The vision of the programme is to actively involve all Unilever Boksburg stakeholders to reduce new HIV infections and to create a caring and supportive service for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- In 2002 the trade union's annual workers congress approved a resolution endorsing the principals underlying the Unilever HIV/AIDS policy.
- Unilever Boksburg's prevention programme relies on management training, peer education and condom distribution. Active employees participate in community HIV/AIDS activities.
- Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services are available to employees on a medical plan at the on-site occupational clinic. Approximately 16% of Unilever Boksburg's employees have taken advantage of the service in the last year and a half.
- All employees are eligible to join a health plan. HIV+ employees who are enrolled in a health plan may gain access to Unilever Boksburg's comprehensive care, support and treatment programmes, including medically appropriate Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART).
- Management is also in the process of establishing a cluster of HIV/AIDS child care homes in Vosloorus, a local township for residents. A cluster of child care homes is already operational in KwaZulu Natal.

Project Evaluation

Unilever sets goals and evaluates performance through their "HIV/AIDS roadmap". During 2001 the company undertook another strategic review of the current programme, including external best practices.

- Unilever has developed a roadmap and assessment tool, described in the documents section, which is used every quarter to guide and evaluate each location's programme.
- Unilever South Africa's board reviews Unilever Boksburg's HIV/AIDS programme performance on a quarterly basis.
- A site-specific estimate for HIV prevalence linked to an economic impact assessment strengthens Unilever Boksburg's understanding of the business case.

In the future, Unilever Boksburg plans to launch a voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) campaign, work with stakeholders to develop a sustainable way to provide broader access to HAART, and continue to increase corporate advocacy and the development and improvement of programmes at other Unilever locations and at other companies.

Programme Description

Policy

Unilever implemented a company-wide HIV/AIDS policy in May 2002. Unilever Boksburg is currently in the process of working with management and labour to develop and sign a site-specific HIV/AIDS policy. In 2002, the Boksburg workers' congress drafted a separate resolution which endorsed the principles and programmes underlying Unilever's HIV/AIDS policies.

- **Non-discrimination:** (1) employees will not be dismissed on the ground of their HIV status; (2) employees will undergo a medical exam before starting employment, but the exam does not include an HIV test and hiring decisions and will not utilize an HIV assessment.
- **Confidentially and disclosure:** (1) employees are not required to disclose status; (2) if status is disclosed, it cannot be disclosed to others without written consent.
- **Benefits:** (1) employees have the option to participate in one of Unilever's health insurance plans; (2) participating employees – approximately 65% of all employees – are expected to pay for about half of their healthcare premiums; (3) the different health plans provide access to HIV/AIDS coverage, including access to Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART) for employees who declare their status to the insurance programme; (4) depending on the programme, the maximum annual benefit per family ranges from US\$ 1,500 to US\$ 4,000 per year; (5) Unilever South Africa's health, retirement and other insurances do not discriminate against HIV/AIDS status.
- **Ill-health retirement:** (1) the employee, management, or the company's medical services can initiate an ill-health retirement request; (2) the company doctor, or an employee provided physician, will conduct a medical assessment to evaluate if the employee is capable of performing the required job, or is capable of performing an alternate job; (3) employees living with HIV are supported and encouraged to keep working for as long as they are able and well.
- **Contractors:** (1) on-site contractors and suppliers are not required to adhere to Unilever's HIV/AIDS policy; (2) although not contractually required, any contractor that works at the Boksburg factory has access to Unilever prevention programmes; (3) plans are in place to distribute the induction training brochures to site-specific suppliers and customers.

Prevention and Awareness

Unilever Boksburg's prevention programme relies on management training, peer education and condom distribution. Active employees are also encouraged and supported when they participate in community HIV/AIDS activities both to provide valuable services and to help internalize the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

- In 2001, Unilever Boksburg targeted upper **management with a two to three hour training session**. In 2002, the training sessions were extended to include **line managers**. In 2003, HIV/AIDS will be added as a formal component of **induction training**, and a flyer has already been developed to support this training. These training sessions include presentations from people living with AIDS – through a partnership with National Association of People Living with AIDS (NAPWA) – external speakers and company representatives.
- **25 peer educators (36:1 ratio)** have been trained through **five day externally certified training course**. These peer educators are also provided with access to on-going workshops several times a year to develop specific knowledge and capabilities. In addition to informal one-on-one meetings, many managers allow peer educators to add short HIV/AIDS discussions to regular business or operational meetings. Unilever Boksburg estimates that of the 25 peer educators, approximately 15 are active on an on-going basis.
- Unilever Boksburg distributes **government supplied male condoms for free** through workplace dispensers, peer educators, and through the occupational health clinic. It is estimated that in the first half of 2002 the programme distributed an average of 400 condoms per month, which corresponds to **0.4 per employee per month**.
- Active **employees are encouraged to initiate and participate in HIV/AIDS outreach activities**. These activities provide the community with support, as well as a venue for a potentially life-influencing event for the participating employees. For example, employees were provided with support to sponsor a puppet show for AIDS orphans and children living with HIV/AIDS. Also, other employees were given the flexibility to adjust shift schedules to visit AIDS patients in a local hospice. In addition to the 15 Peer Group Educators, approximately 20 employees took part in ad-hoc community HIV/AIDS related activities over the last 12-18 months.

Programme Description (continued...)

Voluntary Counselling and Testing

VCT services are available to employees on a medical plan at the on-site occupational clinic. Approximately 16% of Unilever Boksburg's employees have taken advantage of the service in the last year and a half.

- The service is available both through internal and external providers. Unilever estimates that each on-site test costs US\$ 17, including US\$ 6 in laboratory costs provided externally. The 65% of employees on a medical plan may access the service for free, and the remainder of employees may access the service on a fee for service basis.
- An estimated 140 employees have taken advantage of Unilever Boksburg's VCT services from January 2001 to September 2002. This corresponds to approximately **16% of employees**. Unilever Boksburg plans to conduct a VCT campaign in 2003.
- **20 counsellors (45:1 ratio)** are available to provide one-on-one counselling for employees who would like to learn more about their risk and potentially seek VCT services. Initially these were Unilever Boksburg medical practitioners, but this group was recently expanded to include a wider group of employees. Some of the counsellors are also peer educators.

Care, Support and Treatment

HIV+ employees who are enrolled in a health plan may gain access to Unilever Boksburg's comprehensive care, support and treatment programmes.

- All HIV+ employees may take advantage of Unilever Boksburg **management of opportunistic infections**: (1) prophylaxis with isoniazide (INH) and Co-trimoxazole (Bactrim); (2) early identification and treatment of opportunistic diseases during regular check-ups at the factory health clinic.
- All HIV+ employees may also take advantage **nutritional counselling, nutritional supplements and general counselling services**.
- Employees and registered dependants who have enrolled in a health plan may choose to register their HIV+ status with an HIV/AIDS scheme to obtain medically appropriate benefits. Depending on the medical scheme that the patient is enrolled in, this provides an annual cap per employee ranging from US\$ 1,500 to US\$ 4,000. Each programme provides specific treatment guidelines for the physicians to follow, but they include coverage for medically appropriate **Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART)**. Unilever does not track the aggregate number of patients who have enrolled in comprehensive care, support and treatment programmes with their health insurance provider.
- Unilever is currently exploring ways to engage all relevant stakeholders to ensure a minimum level of comprehensive care, support and treatment for HIV+ employees.

Case-specific HIV/AIDS Resources

Documents

[Unilever Global – HIV/AIDS Policy \(May 2002\)](#)

[Unilever Global – Guidelines for Policies and Programmes](#)

[Unilever Global – HIV/AIDS Assessment Form](#)

[Unilever Global – HIV/AIDS Roadmap for Potential Interventions](#)

[Unilever Boksburg – Workers Congress Resolution on HIV/AIDS \(2002\)](#)

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This case study uses the following exchange rate: 10 South African rands to 1 United States dollar.

The World Economic Forum Global Health Initiative Private Sector Case example is developed in collaboration with the featured company. However, GHI member companies and partners, the World Economic Forum and the contributing company do not necessarily subscribe to every view expressed herein. The case is based on a self-reporting model. Although the GHI makes reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of the statements, this report should not be viewed as an external audit of the programme described.

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